

Thursday 14 December 2023

[for immediate publication]

More than 175,000 GP appointments lost over 11 months due to no-shows

Tens of thousands of GP appointments in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire are being wasted each month due to patients not cancelling in advance when they are unable to attend.

With a total of 148,454 appointments missed in the 11 months between December 2022 and October 2023, patients are being asked to take action and always let their practice know if they cannot make their booking.

Doing so will allow practices to offer appointment slots to other patients, many of whom, particularly those with symptoms that could be the early warning signs of cancer, will be eager to see a GP as quickly as possible.

In August 2023, the number of patient no-shows for the whole of Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire stood at 14,722, which was approximately three per cent of all booked appointments for the month.

However, the figure rose dramatically the following month to 18,972, before surging again in to 22,615 in October 2023, when did-not-attends accounted for three and a half per cent of all booked appointments.

Dr Amanda Webb, GP and Chief Medical Officer for Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, said: “To see our region’s rate of wasted appointments jump by almost 8,000 in the space of two months is alarming.

“If this trend continues, especially at this current time when demand for appointments remains incredibly high, many people very much in need of seeing a GP will be forced to wait much longer than necessary.

“The ramifications of not cancelling are also felt across other health services, particularly in our region’s hospitals, as we know people unable to get a GP appointment but desperate for care will often seek help from an emergency department, which, as the name suggests, should only be used in life-threatening situations.

“We completely understand that people can’t always make their appointment, and our teams are happy to reschedule, but we really need patients to meet us halfway, and to contact us as early as possible when they know they won’t be attending.”

Wiltshire-based practices saw their highest number of did-not-attends during October 2023, when 11,185 appointments were booked but not fulfilled.

The same month also proved to be equally high for practices in both Swindon and Bath and North East Somerset, with 6,853 and 4,577 missed appointments respectively recorded in each area.

Most GP practices in the region offer patients the opportunity to cancel their appointment quickly and easily by text message, while some also allow bookings to be managed online.

Cancellations can be made over the phone too and, in most cases, the appointment can be cancelled by just pressing a number from the list of answerphone options.

Further information on health and care in the local region, as well as details on what services can be accessed and when, can be found online at www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk.

Notes to Editors

- For further information or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson from Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, please email bswicb.media@nhs.net.
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board is a statutory organisation that is responsible for developing a plan of how to meet the health needs of 940,000 people, managing the local NHS budget and arranging the provision of local health services.
- BSW ICB is part of the wider BSW Integrated Care System, which brings NHS providers, local authorities, community providers and voluntary sector partners together to collaboratively plan and organise how health and care services are delivered. The ICB has a Board made up of representatives from various organisations across the BSW health and care system.
- The local integrated care system is known as BSW Together, and is home to 87 GP practices, two mental health trusts, three local councils, a single ambulance provider, three acute hospitals, a number of other NHS providers and more than 2,800 voluntary organisations and community groups.
- Visit www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk for more information